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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 001081

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/19/2015

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SUBJECT: BRAZIL: MRE UNDER SECRETARY PEDROSA DISCUSSES  
SOUTH AMERICA-ARAB SUMMIT WITH AMBASSADOR

REF: BRASILIA 715 AND 660

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN J. DANILOVICH. REASONS:  
1.4(B)(D).

1. (C) On 18 April Ambassador Vera Pedrosa, Foreign Ministry (MRE) Under Secretary for Political Affairs, called Ambassador to the ministry to discuss the 11-12 May South America- Arab Summit in Brasilia. Pedrosa explained that she had "heard indirectly" from other foreign diplomats that the USG is concerned about the possibility that the summit will produce politically charged statements that could damage Middle East peace prospects. Pedrosa wanted to assure the Ambassador that "there is no need for any kind of alarm." She elaborated with the following points:

-- While Pedrosa would not provide a text of the draft declaration for the summit, she assured Ambassador that the text contains no "problematic language" on either terrorism or the peace process. On political issues, she said "there is no language that is not consensual language from the UN." She said that South American delegations had "spoken with one voice" on the content of the text in negotiations with Arab representatives. (Note: Pedrosa jokingly commented that she assumed the U.S. already had a leaked copy of the draft declaration. Ambassador assured her we had seen nothing since the earlier draft texts that had been leaked to the press some months ago. End note.)

-- The GOB had originally proposed that there not be any formal declaration coming out of the summit, but most delegations led by heads of state had insisted on a declaration, Pedrosa noted.

-- The GOB has no intention or interest in trying to influence the Middle East peace process, nor does it presume that it has the "clout" to do so, Pedrosa said. She said the GOB does not believe the summit will have any impact on the peace process or Middle East politics.

-- Pedrosa did affirm that there will a public forum in which heads of state at the summit will each have about five minutes to make statements. Obviously, the GOB cannot control what heads of state might say in their allotted times, so that is one window of risk for damaging statements, Pedrosa acknowledged.

-- Pedrosa insisted the focus of the summit has always been and remains expansion of trade and cultural ties between the regions. The attention the Lula administration has already devoted to the Middle East has helped encourage a substantial increase in commercial relations already, and Lula wants to expand on this, Pedrosa said. Similarly, the large Middle East-origin population in Brazil and other South American nations argue for closer cultural ties, she said. Indeed, Pedrosa posited that bringing some closed Arab states into closer contact "with other realities" may help in advancing democracy in those countries. Pedrosa also placed the summit in the context of Brazil's interest in broader south-south cooperation, noting the GOB is also planning a summit with African nations.

-- Pedrosa would not comment on the number of heads of state confirmed for the conference, but said the GOB would count the conference successful if fifty percent of those invited attended. She also said that Iraq had been invited to send representation, but the level of the delegation is not determined yet. Asked about comments by Argentine President Kirchner that he might not attend, Pedrosa said the GOB remains hopeful that he will appear in the end.

12. (C) Ambassador expressed appreciation for the reassurances and said he would convey them at once to Washington, but reiterated the strong USG concerns that he and other senior USG officials have conveyed recently to GOB counterparts about the possible deleterious effects of inflammatory statements on the peace process at a fragile and promising moment. Noting that he personally had discussed the summit with both FM Amorim and MRE Secretary General Guimaraes (reftels), Ambassador said the USG remains worried about damaging rhetoric flowing from the event.

13. (C) Comment. Pedrosa was amiable, even jolly, in her reassurances that "there is no need for any kind of alarm." But we found it odd that the third most senior MRE official would call Ambassador in on this hot button bilateral issue

so late in the game, ostensibly on the basis of "indirect information," when Ambassador has recently engaged directly with both Amorim and Guimaraes on the summit, in candid discussions that reflected meetings on the issue in Washington between Brazilian Ambassador Abdenur, the NSC and Department. In our view, Pedrosa's tenure in her current position has been rather undistinguished, and she is slated for Brazil's embassy in Paris as a retirement posting some time this year. She seems to be out of the loop -- and liking it that way. In that context, we must recommend a modicum of skepticism about her comments on the summit.

DANILOVICH